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Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 EA-07 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

SAM-01 OMB-01 IO-13 EB-07 ACDA-07 SAJ-01 /096 W
---------- 026638
R 120513Z APR 76
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2830
INFO AMCONGEN HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USLO PEKING
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
CINCPAC HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 9263

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, VN, SW
SUBJ: SWEDISH VIEWS ON VIET-NAM

SUMMARY: THE SWEDISH AMBASSADOR TO HANOI RELATES HIS OBSERVATIONS ON A NUMBER OF SUBJECTS CONCERNING THAT COUNTRY. HE DOES NOT BELIEVE THE DRV HAS AGGRESSIVE DESIGNS ON THAILAND BUT IS CONVINCED THAT IT IS PREOCCUPIED WITH PROBLEMS CLOSER TO HOME. END SUMMARY.

1. EMBOFF MET APRIL 8 WITH SWEDISH AMBASSADOR TO HANOI, BO KJELLEN, WHO WAS PASSING THROUGH BANGKOK EN ROUTE HOME TO GREET DRV FOREIGN MINISTER NGUYEN DUY TRINH ON HIS OFFICIAL VISIT TO SWEDEN. KJELLEN HAS BEEN IN HANOI FOR 1 1/2 YEARS AND BELIEVES THAT HIS NEED TO DISCUSS SWEDEN'S AID PROJECTS (WHICH
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HE DESCRIBED AS UNDERGOING DIFFICULTIES BUT AT LEAST

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GOING FORWARD) HAS GIVEN HIM ENTREE INTO PARTS OF THE NORTH VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT WHICH MOST NON-COMMUNIST DIPLOMATS DO NOT HAVE. THIS PROVIDES HIM WITH A GOOD OPPORTUNITY TO TRY TO UNDERSTAND THAT COUNTRY. PRINCIPAL COMMENTS AS FOLLOWS.

2. DRV FOCUS OF ATTENTION. KJELLEN IS CONVINCED THAT THE DRV HAS DECIDED TO PLACE PRIORITY ON RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTRY, COMBINED WITH COPING WITH THE PROBLEMS OF UNIFYING TWO DISPARATE REGIONS. THIS IS IN ACCORDANCE WITH PUBLIC OPINION, TO THE EXTENT IT CAN MAKE ITS VIEWS KNOWN. HE SAID HE REMAINS ASTONISHED AT THE EXTENT OF THE DESTRUCTION EXISTING IN THE NORTH AT THE END OF THE CONFLICT, WHETHER IN HOUSING OR IN BRIDGES AND ROADS. ALONG WITH THESE PROBLEMS ARE BASIC ECONOMIC ILLS: AN AGRICULTURAL SECTOR WHICH IS RELATIVELY EFFICIENT DESPITE THE ABSENCE OF MODERN MACHINERY BUT WHICH FAILED BADLY IN THIS YEAR'S RICE HARVEST, AND AN INDUSTRIAL SECTOR WHICH HAS PROBLEMS IN PART DUE TO THE WAR BUT ALSO CONSIDERABLE INEFFICIENCY, NOT GETTING RAW MATERIALS TO THE RIGHT PLACE AT THE RIGHT TIME, AND THE LIKE.

3. EXPORTING REVOLUTION. THESE NEEDS LEAVE NO TIME TO FORMULATE AND EXECUTE AN AGGRESSIVE POLICY TOWARD THAILAND, KJELLEN BELIEVED. THE THAI SITUATION IS SUCH A DIFFERENT ONE FROM THE PREVIOUS ACTIVITY IN SOUTH VIET NAM. KJELLEN THOUGHT THAT THE THAI ARE EXAGGERATING THE POSSIBILITY OF HOSTILE VIETNAMESE ACTION, AT THE SAME TIME THE VIETNAMESE ARE EXAGGERATING THE THREAT THE PERCEIVE THE U.S. BASES IN THAILAND POSING TO THEM. HE HAD NO COMMENT ON THE EXTENT OF VIETNAMESE SUPPORT FOR THE THAI INSURGENCY BUT THOUGHT THE NORTH VEITNAMESE TROOPS IN LAOS WERE THERE MORE FOR CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS THAN FOR AGGRESSIVE PURPOSES.

4. THAI VIETNAMESE RELATIONS. KJELLEN SAID HE ASKED A SENIOR NORTH VIETNAMESE MFA OFFICIAL DURING A SERIES OF PARTICULARLY SHRILL VERBAL ATTACKS ON THAILAND WHY THE DRV WAS PURSUING THIS POLICY. THE OFFICIAL REPLIED THAT PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT IS SO WEAK THAT IT IS INEVITABLE THAT HE IS UNDER U.S. CONTROL; THEREFORE NORTH VIET-NAM SEES NO REASON TO
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LET UP ON ITS ATTACKS. KJELLEN HAD THE IMPRESSION THAT THE DRV TONE HAS BECOME MUCH MILDER SINCE THE APRIL 4 ELECTIONS, ALTHOUGH IF THE NEW GOVERNMENT WERE TO RECONSIDER THE MARCH 20 DECISION ON AMERICAN TROOP WITHDRAWAL, HANOI WOULD TURN UP THE VOLUME AGAIN.

5. KJELLEN BELIEVED THAT VIETNAMESE POLICY TOWARD THAILAND IS SIMILAR IN APPROACH TO THAT TOWARD THE U.S.; I.E., ITS

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EXISTS ON TWO LEVELS. THER IS THE LOWER, PROPAGANDA
LEVEL AND THE QUIETER, HIGHER LEVEL WITHIN WHICH THERE CAN
BE MOVEMENT. HE SAID THAT ONE HAS TO HAVE PATIENCE IN SEEKING
OUT THE LATTER. KJELLEN THOUGHT THE VIETNAMESE WOULD BE
WATCHING DEVELOPMENTS IN THAILAND CLOSELY. IT MAY BE
POSSIBLE THAT THE TWO CAN FIND A BASIS FOR RELATIONS IN
THE FUTURE, BUT THE THAI MUST BE PATIENT. EMBOFF COMMENTED
THAT IF THE VIETNAMESE GENUINELY WANT RELATIONS WITH THAI-
LAND, THEY WOULD CERTAINLY NOT APPEAR TO BE GOING ABOUT IT
THE RIGHT WAY. RE ASEAN, KJELLEN SAID THE VIETNAMESE SEEM
FIRMLY CONVINCED THAT THAT ORGANIZATION IS U.S-.DOMINATED.

6. THE BIG POWERS. KJELLEN WENT OVER THE FAMILIAR GROUND
THAT THE VIETNAMESE ARE CLEVERLY PLAYING A BALANCING ACT WITH
THE SOVIETS AND CHINESE, TILTING CURRENTLY TOWARD THE SOVIETS
BECAUSE THEY PROVIDE MORE AID. HE SAID THE RUSSIANS IN
THE DRV JUST DO NOT FIT INTO THE VIETNAMESE SCENE, HOWEVER.
HE NOTED THAT HE AND OTHERS IN HANOI ARE CONVINCED THAT,
SINCE THE END OF THE CONFLICT, THE DRV HAS BEEN LEANING IN
THE DIRECTION OF WESTERN NATIONS IN ORDER TO BALANCE OFF
THE TWO COMMUNIST GIANTS AND OBTAIN ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE AT
THE SAME TIME. IN THIS RESPECT, DIPLOMATS IN HANOI ARE
GENERALLY AGREED THAT THE DRV WANTS RELATIONS WITH AND HELP
FROM THE U.S., BASED ON NUMEROUS PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS WITH
DRV OFFICIALS. KJELLEN ASKED FOREIGN MINISTER TRINH
PRIOR TO DEPARTING HANOI APRIL 7 IF THERE WERE ANY DEVELOP-
MENTS IN DRV RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. TRINH GAVE THE
STOCK REPLY THAT THERE COULD BE IF THE U.S. WOULD RESPECT
ARTICLE 21 OF THE PARIS ACCORDS. KJELLEN SEES AMERICAN
AID AS BEING CERTAINLY THE PRICE FOR RELATIONS. THE NORTH
VIETNAAMESE COULD DO MORE ON THE MIA ISSUE, BUT AID WOULD
MOVE IT FARTHER UP THE LIST OF VIETNAMESE PRIORITIES THAN
IT IS AT PRESENT.
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7. RELATIONS WITH CHINA. ASKED WHETHER HE HAD HEARD RUMORS
SEVERAL MONTHS AGO OF MINOR PROBLEMS ON THE CHINSE-VIET-
NAMESE BORDER, KJELLEN SAID HE HAD BUT KNEW NO SPECIFICS
AND THOUGHT THE HANOI LEADERSHIP WOULD DO ALL IT COULD TO
MINIMIZE SUCH A CONFLICT. KJELLEN AND THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR
IN HANOI VISITED CAO BANG PROVINCE ON THE BORDER IN NOVEM-
BER AND PEERED ACROSS INTO CHINA. THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR
POINTED OUT THAT THE TOWN OF CAO BANG HAD BEEN A SIGNIFICANT
FRENCH MILITARY POST PREVIOUSLY. IN NOVEMBER, THE TWO SAW
VERY FEW NVA DURING THEIR VISIT TO THAT PROVINCE.

8. THE ISLANDS DISPUTE. KJELLEN WONDERED WHETHER, BEYOND
THE RHETORIC, THERE WILL NOT BE A SORT OF ASIAN SOLUTION
FORTHCOMING, WHEREBY THE CHINESE TACITLY RECOGNIZE THE

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VIETNAMESE HOLDINGS IN THE SPRATLEYS AND THE VIETNAMESE ON THE PETROLEUM FRONT ARE NOT IN THE ISLANDS BUT OFF THE MEKONG DELTA.

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L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

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CINCPAC HONOLULU

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9. RELATIONS WITH INDOCHINA. KJELLEN CLAIMED THE NORTH VIETNAMESE DO NOT WANT TO CONTROL INDOCHINA. HE SAID HE IS CONVINCED THAT THE LAO ARE SENSITIVE ON THE QUESTION OF THEIR NATIONALISM. THE LAO AND VIETNAMESE GREETED ONE ANOTHER DURING KAYSONE'S FEBRUARY VISIT MORE AS VERY OLD FRIENDS THAN ANYTHING ELSE. HE HAD THE IMPRESSION THAT THE NORTH VIETNAMESE HAVE LITTLE REAL KNOWLEDGE ABOUT WHAT IS HAPPENING INSIDE CAMBODIA.

10. REUNIFICATION. SINCE THE NEW NATIONAL ASSEMBLY TO BE ELECTED APRIL 25 MUST MEET BY JUNE 25, KJELLEN WOULD EXPECT FORMAL REUNIFICATION TO OCCUR QUICKLY THEREAFTER, CERTAINLY BY THE END OF JUNE.

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11. THE SOUTH. BASED ON HIS TRIP TO SAIGON IN SEPTEMBER
AND THE VISIT OF SOME MEMBERS OF HIS STAFF RECENTLY, KJELLEN
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SAID THE NEW AUTHORITIES HAVE SIMPLY BEEN UNABLE TO COPE WITH
MANY OF THE PROBLEMS EXISTING IN THE THE SOUTH. HIS STAFF MEMBERS
WERE ABLE TO GO TO ONE NEW ECONOMIC AREA, WHICH THEY DESCRIBED
AS VERY POOR AND HARDLY WORKING VERY WELL AS YET. ALTHOUGH
IT IS TRUE THAT A WIDE RANGE OF CONSUMER ITEMS HAS BEEN
SHIPPED FROM THE SOUTH TO THE NORTH, QUANTITIES HAVE NOT
BEEN OVERWHELMING. THE ONLY ADDITIONAL ITEM NOW APPEARING
IN THE DIPLOMATIC SHOP IN HANOI IS KLEENEX, FROM THE SOUTH.
THE TRANSFER OF GOODS HAS RESULTED IN THE STRANGEST HODGEPODGE
OF VEHICLES APPEARING SINCE WAR'S END IN THE STREETS OF HANOI.

12. VIETNAMESE LEADERSHIP. KJELLEN SAID HE OFTEN SEES
PREMIER PHAM VAN DONG IN PUBLIC, BUT HE SEES FIRST SECRE-
TARY LE DUAN-- WHO IS WITHOUT QUESTION THE BOSS--FAR LESS
FREQUENTLY. AS OPPOSED TO NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT
TRUONG CHINH (WHO DOES NOT SEEM TO HAVE AS MUCH POWER AS HIS
RANK ORDER ON THE POLITBURO WOULD INDICATE), BOTH LEADERS
SEEM VERY PRACTICAL AND NON-IDEOLOGICAL. FOR INSTANCE,
DESPITE THEIR PERSONAL DISLIKE FOR THE FRENCH BASED ON
PAST HISTORY, BOTH ARE WILLING TO PUT IT ASIDE IN ORDER TO
TAKE ADVANTAGE OF FRENCH HELP. HE SAID THE LEADERSHIP HAS
MUCH OF THE FLAVOR OF A GROUP OF "OLD BOYS". WHEREAS IT
IS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO KNOW ABOUT THE ATTITUDES OF THE
NEXT GENERATION OF LEADERS, ONE CAN EXPECT THE PRESENT ONE
TO CONTINUE RULING FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS. KJELLEN NOTED
THAT, EXCEPT FOR PRESIDENT TON DUC THANG, ALL, INCLUDING
GENERAL VO NGUYEN GIAP, LOOK VERY FIT. KJELLEN THOUGHT IT
LOGICAL THAT THANG, NOW 87, WOULD STEP DOWN WHEN THE NEW
GOVERNMENT IS ORGANIZED.

13. COMMENT:. KJELLEN SEEMED WELL DISPOSED TOWARD THE U.S.
AND OPEN WITH US ABOUT HIS VIEWS. HIS VIEWPOINT IS REPRE-
SENTATIVE OF THAT OF A NUMBER OF HANOI-BASED DIPLOMATS, WHO
LOOK FOR THE BRIGHT SIDE OFNORTH VIETNAMESE INTENTIONS.
HE HAS ABSORBED, AND REPEATED TO US, CONSIDERABLE AMOUNTS
OF NORTH VIETNAMESE PROPAGANDA AND AT TIMES GIVES THE IM-
PRESSION OF BEING ALMOST AN APOLOGIST FOR THE REGIME. NEUTRAL
DIPLOMATS IN BERLIN DURING WORLD WAR II EXHIBITED THE SAME
TENDENCIES THAT AMBASSADOR KJELLEN SHOWS. STILL, WE FOUND
HIS VIEWS INTERESTING AND THE SOURCE KNOWLEDGEABLE.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PERSONAL OPINION, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, AMBASSADORS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 APR 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: saccheem
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976BANGKO09263
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X2
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760137-0448
From: BANGKOK
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760473/aaaackcu.tel
Line Count: 279
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 6
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: saccheem
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <19 APR 2004 by buchant0>; APPROVED <16 AUG 2004 by saccheem>
Review Markings:

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US Department of State
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04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SWEDISH VIEWS ON VIET-NAM SUMMARY: THE SWEDISH AMBASSADOR TO HANOI RELATES HIS OBSERVA-
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, VN, SW, (KJELLEN)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006